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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Midsummer Vegetable Plates

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A radio talk given by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics and Mr. F. E. Perkins, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 51 associate NBC stations, Thursday, August 20, 1936.

MR. PERKINS: Now, as everybody knows, Thursday is the day for one of Miss Van Deman's Household Calendar talks. So far I've been only one of your listeners, Miss Van Deman. So it's a pleasure to be here today and introduce you and turn the microphone over to you.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Perkins. But don't run away. I'm going to talk about some things that will interest you, I think. And I need your advice.

MR. PERKINS: My advice?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, I like to get a man's opinion about household matters, especially about food. For instance, what do you think about vegetable plates? Do you like to have a dinner occasionally with a vegetable plate as the main course?

MR. PERKINS: I had a good one about a half hour ago. But I don't like a plateful of watery green stuff, like so much seaweed.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And tasting just about like seaweed - flat and brackish.

MR. PERKINS: Yes, that's it. I see you've met vegetable plates like that too.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh yes, to the absolute loss of my appetite. I don't blame you, Mr. Perkins, for turning thumbs down on that kind. There's really no excuse for vegetables cooked to a dead level of mediocrity like that any time of year. And certainly not now, when Mr. Beatty tells me that the gardens which have escaped the drought are just about at the peak of their summer production.

MR. PERKINS: Well, Miss Van Deman, we're agreed on the kind of a vegetable plate we don't like. What's your idea of a perfect vegetable plate?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Three or four vegetables that contrast pleasantly in flavor, and color, and texture, and to a certain extent in food values, so the combination has staying power.

MR. PERKINS: You're taking me over the jumps pretty fast. Remember I'm a newcomer. Won't you give me some concrete examples of what you mean?

MISS VAN DEMAN: All right. We'll take flavor first. For instance, to offset the bland flavor of potatoes, or squash, or rice, you need something pungent and flavorful like onions, or turnips, or green peppers, or Harvard beets with their sweet-sour sauce.

MR. PERKINS: Or maybe some cabbage slaw? How would that be?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Excellent. And the raw cabbage would be good for texture too. A vegetable plate needs something crisp and crunchy, in contrast to the soft texture of the cooked vegetables. You can get this also with something crisp and fried, like French fried eggplant or potatoes, or with fritters - corn fritters or apple fritters, or with strips of crisp bacon laid on top of spinach or greens.

MR. PERKINS: I like bacon with my greens. Seems to make the meal last longer when I work.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Quite so, and so does a vegetable with a lot of protein. I always try to include beans or peas on a vegetable plate, or one scalloped with cheese, or stuffed with meat.

MR. PERKINS: Then your vegetable plates aren't strictly vegetable.

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, not always. If a little meat or cheese is needed for protein and flavor, and I have it at hand, I most certainly use it.

Now, just a word about color. Every vegetable plate needs an accent of bright color, like the red of a tomato, the orange of a serving of carrots, or the scarlet of a few strips of pimiento. This makes the green of spinach or snap beans, or peas, look fresher and brighter. Then golden brown food has a special appetite appeal. It suggests richness, especially if placed next to a mound of creamy white potato, say. What you want to avoid is getting too many foods of the same color on the plate. That's monotonous and gives the dreary effect you described a moment ago, Mr. Perkins.

MR. PERKINS: That's all interesting, Miss Van Deman. Now won't you just name off two or three A 1 combinations?

MISS VAN DEMAN: That depends on what part of the country you're talking about. In the land of okra and blackeyed peas, a good vegetable plate would be tomato stuffed with rice, fried okra, buttered turnips, blackeyed peas cooked with a ham hock, and a piece or two of watermelon pickle or a pickled peach.

MR. PERKINS: That would satisfy me all right. That is, if I could have seconds.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Certainly - that's understood. Now, if I were up North, I'd look around for some of that good Golden Bantam sweet corn, or one of its new hybrid cousins. I'd have corn-on-the-cob, and fried yellow squash, and buttered swiss chard or some of those tender green-podded Kentucky Wonder beans, and fresh sliced tomato with a little oil and vinegar dressing. And to eat with that vegetable plate, I'd like some hot blueberry muffins, right out of the oven.

MR. PERKINS: I know from experience about those hot blueberry muffins. No before you sign off, won't you tell us if you have any bulletin or printed material about cooking vegetables?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, we have a bulletin called "Conserving food value,

flavor, and attractiveness in cooking vegetables", Circular 265.

MR. PERKINS: Everybody hear that? Circular 265, "Conserving food value, flavor, and attractiveness in cooking vegetables". If you want a copy, send a card to Miss Van Deman at the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, here in Washington. And thank you very much, Miss Van Deman, we'll be looking for you again next Thursday.

